

Cottage Housing Conclusions

Do the development standards that are already in the code work for this type of development? Should some standards be modified and if so, how?

Proposed development standards are being recommended, and follow several public process steps that have been completed, including focus groups, a public forum, and on-line outreach.

The existing requirements for Residential Small Lot and Cottage Housing Developments (SMC 23.43.012) successfully provide the basic development standards for this housing type, with only minor changes necessary. Density limits, minimum/maximum lot area, lot coverage, yard and height limit requirements prescribe a collective building envelope and site plan that should be compatible in scale and function with a surrounding single family area.

In looking at other built cottage developments in the region, open space and landscaping play a significant role in shaping successful projects by helping to define character and scale. Built projects demonstrate the value porches add to cottage developments, both those that face the street and those that front shared courtyard space. Allowing porches with a minimum depth of six feet to be counted toward private open space requirements is recommended. A small per-unit decrease in the amount of total open space is being examined in the context of landscaping and overall quality and usability of such spaces.

Existing height provisions for cottages work well. The height allowed under existing standards allows 10 feet above the maximum 18 foot limit for 6:12 pitched roofs. This type of gabled roof results in a form that is complementary to traditional domestic architecture.

Design review for cottage housing is recommended to help address basic design principles to improve future cottage developments.

Innovation and variety in design should be supported through the Design Review process—particularly in an area where a dominant or compelling architectural context does not currently exist. It is recognized that “by the book” standards are not appropriate for every site, and that there are many more ways of achieving design excellence than can possibly be anticipated in development standards. Design Review allows for this, while helping to ensure scale compatibility with the surrounding area.

What development standards, including height, are appropriate for accessory structures? Should some standards be modified and if so, how?

Generally cottage development places a greater number of structures on a site than would otherwise be allowed in single family zones, however, the actual lot coverage is comparable to what is allowed for standard single family development. Existing cottage standards restrict accessory uses and structures (e.g., subjecting garages to yard and setback requirements and limiting them to 12 feet in height), and provide a good template for the cottage housing proposal. In the cottage housing proposal, however, allowing the garage in the rear yard can be explored. Through Design Review, potential impacts of accessory structures in rear yards can be addressed with design solutions such as modulation, landscaping and screening, and other site-specific solutions.

If Design Review is to be used for this type of development, are additional design guidelines needed to address more directly the issues relevant to this type of single family development?

Some additional design guidance focusing on open space, including the roles of both private and semi-public open spaces in making successful developments, would be helpful. But of greater importance is to provide those administering design review with as much information and training as possible on the housing type (such as successful examples).